Insights into Federal Financial Aid: Understanding Satisfactory Academic Progress

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advancing quality college courses for high school students

PRESENTER

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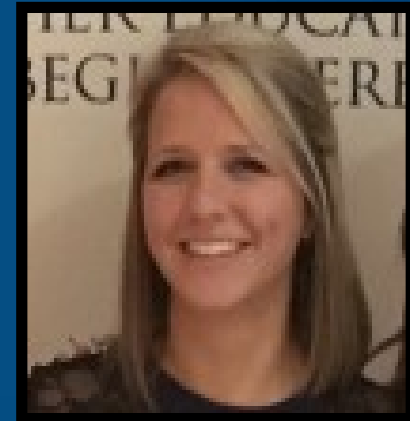
SATISFACTORY ACADEMIC PROGRESS (SAP)

668.34 (a) Satisfactory Academic Progress policy

An institution must establish a reasonable satisfactory academic progress policy for determining whether an otherwise eligible student is making satisfactory academic progress in his or her educational program and may receive assistance under the Title IV, HEA programs.

SAP STANDARDS

- Reasonable

- Consistently applied

- Applies to all Title IV programs

  - If not meeting SAP, not eligible for any TIV program

  - Cannot say eligible for Pell but not eligible for Loans

- Schools have a lot of flexibility
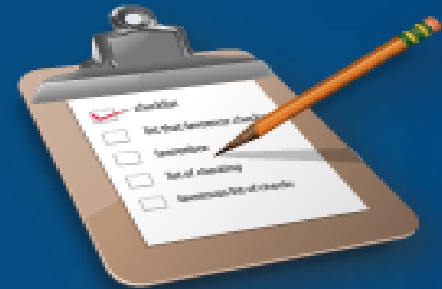
"AS STRICT OR STRICTER"

- Having an SAP policy "as strict or stricter" then other school policies refers to the *actual measurements* used to monitor qualitative and quantitative standards - GPA and pace of progression

- It does NOT refer to the frequency in which the school checks SAP

  - Therefore academics might check GPA every term but financial aid can check GPA for SAP purposes annually

SAP EVALUATION ITEMS

- At each formal SAP evaluation point, a school checks:
  1. Qualitative measure (grade-based)
     - Remedial coursework qualitative measure may be part of or separate from regular qualitative measure
     - Qualitative measure for programs greater than two years
  2. Quantitative measure (pace of progression)
  3. Maximum timeframe

- Policy must describe how student's GPA and pace of completion are affected by:

    - *Incompletes*

    - *Withdrawals*

    - *Repetitions*

    - *Transfers of credits*

        - Transfer credits accepted toward completion of student's program <u>must</u> count as both hours attempted and hours completed

SAP POLICY Q & A – NON-ACCEPTED CREDITS

Q: SAP regulations require credit hours accepted toward student's program to count as both attempted and completed when calculating pace for SAP. Can an institution's policy include *non-accepted credits* as attempted credits for purposes of these calculations?

A: Yes. The treatment of these credits would be up to the institution. The SAP regulations do not address non-accepted credits.

- May refer to transfer credits or credits earned in other academic programs at your school
- AP/IB credits earned

QUALITATIVE MEASURE

Definition: To access quality of academic work using standards

measureable against a norm

- Grades; work projects; etc.

- Must be <u>cumulative</u>
- May use a graduated or fixed standard
- Can be more restrictive and have payment period measurements in addition to cumulative measures
  - Could have an overall cumulative program or school GPA and a semester GPA requirement

QUANTITATIVE MEASURE

Definition: To measure progress toward program completion

- Must be cumulative

- May use a graduated or fixed standard

- Can be more restrictive and have payment period measurements in addition to cumulative measures

  - Could have an overall cumulative completion pace and a semester completion requirement

QUANTITATIVE MEASURE

- Pace of progression required to make sure student completes within maximum timeframe
- Calculate the pace at which the student is progressing
  - Divide the cumulative number of hours the student has successfully completed by the cumulative number of hours the student has attempted:
    - Cumulative hours completed
    - Cumulative hours attempted
  - Rounding is optional within SAP policy

MAXIMUM TIMEFRAME

- Limits of Maximum Timeframe

  - For undergraduate programs, must be no longer than 150% of published length of educational program

  - For graduate programs, school defines the maximum based upon length of program

- Example:

  - Degree program requires 120 credits for completion

  - 120 x 150% = 180 attempted credits is maximum timeframe

- Quantitative measure (tied to max timeframe)

  - 120 credits / 180 credits = 66.6% (usually rounded to 67%)

    - *Student must earn 67% of credit-hours attempted*

SAP EVALUATION

- A student's SAP evaluations, whether each payment period, annually or less often than each payment period, must occur at the <u>end</u> of a payment period
  - *Official evaluation period cannot be less than a payment period*

SAP EVALUATION

- Frequency of evaluation is determine by program length
  - School must evaluate SAP at end of each payment period for programs of study that are *one academic year or less in length*
  - For programs of study *longer than one academic year, s*chool must evaluate at least annually to correspond with end of a payment period
- Regardless of program length, school may evaluate at end of each payment period

SAP EVALUATION

- Each official evaluation must include evaluation of the qualitative (grade-based), quantitative (time-related) and maximum timeframe standards

- Financial aid warning and probation statuses only last for one payment period, no matter how frequently SAP is evaluated

- "Financial aid warning" and "Financial aid probation" must have the same definitions as described in regulation

FINANCIAL AID WARNING

- For an institution that chooses to <u>evaluate SAP at the end of EACH payment period</u>, a "financial aid warning" status *may* be used (optional)

  - Student may continue to receive Title IV aid for ***one payment period***

  - No appeal necessary

  - Note: Possible for student to receive more than one warning period during academic career just NOT consecutively

WARNING

FINANCIAL AID PROBATION

- To be placed on Financial Aid Probation, a student must:
  - Appeal and have it approved by the school; AND
  - Student expected to be making SAP in next payment period; *OR*
  - Be successfully following an academic plan designed to ensure student will be able to *meet SAP by a specific point in time*
    - Not required to develop academic plans
    - Can set conditions on developing plans
    - ED does not define what office(s) must develop and oversee

FINANCIAL AID PROBATION

- A student on Financial Aid Probation may only receive Title IV funds for **ONE payment period**

- A student on F/A Probation may not receive Title IV funds for the subsequent payment period UNLESS:
  - Student is now making SAP; or
  - Institution determines student met requirements specified by the school in the academic plan and student still covered by academic plan

- SAP must be checked at the end of the probationary payment period (even if SAP is normally checked annually)

APPEALS

- Process by which student who is not meeting school's SAP policy petitions for reconsideration of eligibility for Title IV

- Policy must specify the conditions under which a student may appeal

  - Appeal must include:

    - Why the student failed to make SAP; and

    - What has changed that will allow the student to make SAP at the next evaluation

- ED does not define what office must oversee appeals or how appeals are reviewed (individuals, committees, etc.)

Q: What documentation is required for a student appeal?

A: That is up to the institution. An institution may choose to request additional documentation when a particular student circumstance warrants it. The institution may decide to require more extensive documentation on an initial appeal and an update statement on a subsequent appeal.

I failed SAP because I was lazy and immature in high school and I didn't do my homework. Please reinstate my financial aid. Please. Pleaseeeee. Pretty pleaseeeeee.

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HIGHER EDUCATION BEGINS HERE
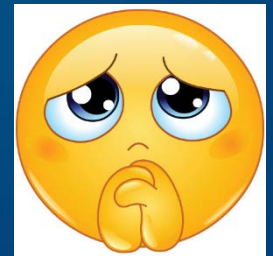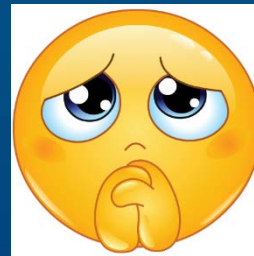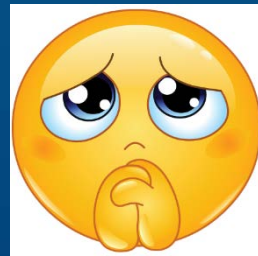
AMNESTY

Q: May an institution's SAP policy include automatic "academic amnesty" in certain circumstances, such as, after a student has not attended for a certain number of payment periods or for credits earned in high school?

A: No. The regulations permit use of the automatic financial aid warning status for institutions that review SAP at each payment period. No other status may be granted automatically. <u>A successful appeal is needed to grant financial aid probation status or to develop an academic plan.</u>

MONITORING SAP

- If measure each payment period:

  - Following a payment period in which the student did not make SAP, the school *may*:

    - Place the student on Financial Aid Warning; or

    - Place the student on Financial Aid Probation (with proper appeal approvals)

  - If already on Financial Aid Warning -

    - After ONE payment period, student must:

      - Make SAP; or

      - *May* be placed on probation after successful appeal

MONITORING SAP

- If evaluate SAP annually or less often than each payment period:

  - Following a payment period in which the student did not make SAP, the school *may*:

    - Place the student on Financial Aid Probation (with proper appeal approvals)

- "Annually" means a 12-month period

  - An institution is expected to review a student's SAP *at least once every 12 months* (for programs allowed to be checked annually)

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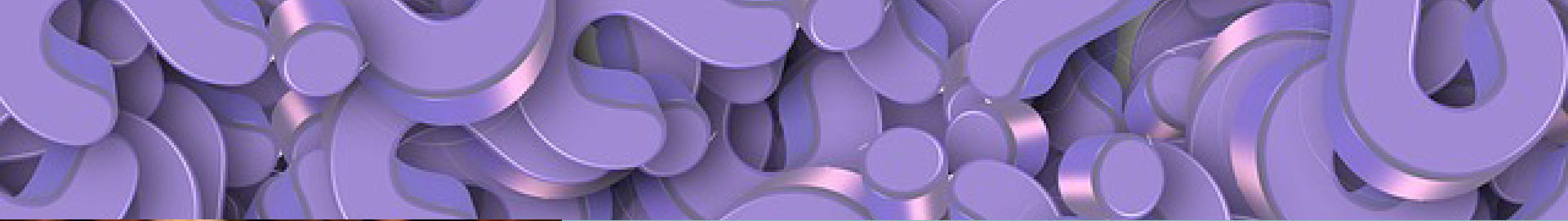
Future NACEP Events:

March 7th- New Standards Feedback Session

March 9th- NACEP's New Strategic Plan: What Does It Mean?

March 13th- Accreditation Mini-Series: Faculty Standards

March 13th- Deadline for National Conference Call for Proposals

March 16th- New Standards Feedback Session

April 3-4th- Western Regional Conference (Missoula College, MT)

April 28th- Accreditation Mini-Series: Curriculum Standards